

# **CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2008**

**7:00 P.M.**

**ATRIUM CONFERENCE ROOM AT CITY HALL  
500 CASTRO STREET**

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

The joint meeting with the General Plan Subcommittee was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson INKS. The regular Environmental Planning Commission meeting immediately followed the joint meeting.

### **2. ROLL CALL**

**Commissioners Present:** Commissioners ANDERSON, BROWN, FERNANDEZ, McALISTER, TRONTELL, Vice Chairperson SODERBERG and Chairperson INKS.

**Commissioners Absent:** None.

**Staff Present:** Martin Alkire, Principal Planner; Scott Plambaeck, Senior Planner; Adriana Garefalos, Senior Planner; Regina Adams, Senior Planner; C. Shelley Emerson, Senior Assistant City Attorney; and Linda Lauzze, Administrative and Neighborhood Services Manager.

**Others Present:** There were 18 members of the public present.

### **3. MINUTES APPROVAL**

#### **3.1 Approval of Minutes for June 4, 2008**

**Motion:** M/S ANDERSON/SODERBERG—Carried 7-0—Recommend approval of the minutes from the June 4, 2008 Environmental Planning Commission meeting, with minor edits on Page 2 (change "CN to CS" and change "Channel 6 to Channel 26").

### **4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC—None.**

### **5. PUBLIC HEARINGS—None.**

## 6. STAFF REPORTS

### 6.1 Housing Element Roundtable

Chairperson INKS reviewed tonight's meeting agenda, including a staff presentation, with input from various community groups. The agenda is tailored to have one representative from each group speak for five minutes, followed by a rotation to a different group, with an option to return to each group as needed. These presentations would then be followed by discussion with the Commissioners.

Principal Planner Alkire stated that there is no formal staff presentation tonight in order to reserve time for roundtable input on the Housing Element. He added that the public participation component is State-mandated as an important part of the Housing Element update. Community outreach will continue throughout the Housing Element update. Principal Planner Alkire commented that the September 17, 2008 meeting would be a second roundtable discussion.

Roy Hayter, Advocates for Affordable Housing, introduced his group as a volunteer group in Mountain View that has been advocating for affordable housing for a number of years. The group's current focus is low-income housing; they are also interested in maintaining existing low-income housing as rentals; they are interested in existing ordinances within the City and are interested in improving the administration of these ordinances. Mr. Hayter commented that these challenges have been before us for some years and that the principles in the Visioning Plan are not new in many ways.

Mr. Hayter commented that those who are doing well with income are doing well with housing. He added that according to statistics based on the 2000 Census, 123 low-income units that have been built during the last Housing Element is about 8 percent of the required total; yet 30 percent of Mountain View residents are in low-income categories. The group is recommending balanced growth for all people in the community; the City is losing housing at the low end and not building to accommodate the 30 percent low-income category residents. Mr. Hayter stated that people should be able to not only work in the City, but also live in the City. The group is advocating for a balanced housing portfolio in Mountain View to support the vision, to maintain diversity and inclusivity, and to consider affordable housing for all income levels.

Theo Nikos, Senior Task Force, asked several questions involving health and safety ordinances within Section 8 and other low-income housing developments in the City.

Sue Schaffer, Alpha Omega Housing Group, introduced other members of this group and stated that the group's mission is to ensure housing provisions for the

homeless of Santa Clara County. Ms. Schaffer provided a brief background of how the group started based on rotating church shelters, which were discontinued. She reported that the group is a community service agency that has spent the last two years investigating the homeless situation in Mountain View, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills. She has submitted a report to staff for Council review. Ms. Schaffer stated that there are an estimated 300 homeless in the area, but it is a difficult number to measure. The figure is closer to 500 that have received services to people in this area: 25 percent to 50 percent are in families; 15 percent are housed in temporary housing; 50 percent are on the street, in a camper, in a car or in a tent. She provided other statistics regarding employment and mental-health percentages. Ms. Shaffer introduced the concept of the "Housing First" Program: housing first, then provide other needed services. In summary, she stated that homelessness is a regional problem. Current needs include: 100 more Housing First units to reduce homeless population; land, zoning and acquisition, and community acceptance.

Sue Russell, League of Women Voters, agreed with comments expressed by the two previous speakers. She summarized her view of the key ideas regarding the Housing Element as: balanced and equitable housing throughout the Bay Area and a certified Housing Element that shows how the City can provide these housing units. A key element of sustainability is important with housing near jobs and transit opportunities. The current allocation in the new Housing Element is 959 low-income housing units. She suggested a focus on rental housing by providing a variety of housing types, including duplexes, fourplexes, incentives for rental housing, and creative use of overlay zones. Ms. Russell commented that the community has expressed a great support for mixed-use housing and housing that is sustainable and walkable. She suggested that the Housing Element should focus on higher densities whenever feasible. Other suggestions were: the City should streamline processing for affordable housing; review the Below-Market-Rate program with a focus on dispersal of lower income throughout the City; encourage the City to commit and provide more staffing to address the issue of affordable housing; and work creatively with property developers.

Maureen Wadiak, Community Services Agency, described her group as the community safety net, serving low-income families, homeless and seniors in this community for over 50 years. Ms. Wadiak briefly talked about trends: families are driving less and walking more; trends in fair-market rental housing with rentals going up \$100 per month; and forcing families out of the City with less City-based work force housing opportunities. The CSA goal is getting people off the streets and into housing. Ms. Wadiak commented that 241 people were served last year through the Alpha Omega Housing Group in a case management model, with rent assistance provided to 19 percent of the people served. Her staff works to help remove access barriers to housing for this community of clients, such as filling out applications. She commented that the need for affordable housing could not be

overstated. She urged the Commission and Council to advocate for clean, safe and decent affordable housing; the development of affordable housing; and to support efforts of builders of affordable housing. Ms. Wadiak commented that CSA is a partner member of a network called the Campaign to End Poverty by 2020.

Chairperson INKS asked the Commissioners for specific questions regarding the staff report or roundtable discussions.

Commissioner BROWN asked how many of the City's homeless are veterans. Ms. Wadiak responded by saying that the homeless are getting older, with the largest demographic being Vietnam-era veterans. Commissioner BROWN asked what kind of assistance and support is available from the Veterans Administration. Ms. Wadiak stated that the Veterans Administration provides psychological and health care and a percentage of disability, but there is no housing assistance.

Commissioner ANDERSON asked for comments and information on the Charities Housing/San Antonio Place property: how is it working and do the residents have jobs? Commissioner BROWN asked if there is a wait list for San Antonio Place.

Dan Wu, Charities Housing, which owns and operates San Antonio Place, stated that there is a wait list at this property. Mr. Wu invited the Commissioners to tour the property. He stated there are 118 units, all studios of 325 square feet; some are furnished, and some are not. He added that the extremely low-income unit list is closed because units do not turn over as often. Mr. Wu provided a brief history of the development of the site and neighborhood community acceptance, particularly in relation to the Community School of Music and Arts.

Commissioner McALISTER asked why some units are furnished and others are unfurnished. Mr. Wu stated that a decision was made on this project to give residents an option to bring their own furniture in or not. Commissioner McALISTER asked for information on what Los Altos is doing regarding affordable housing in comparison to Mountain View. Chairperson INKS asked for clarification of rotating shelters in local churches. Ms. Wadiak commented that the program is case-managed, with screening and a self-selection process, which takes about 30 days. The Federal Government made a decision to stop funding rotating shelter programs, with dollars being shifted to building "bricks and mortar," fixed shelters. She added that the Housing Task Force suggested a case management model with rotating shelters to serve more people to get them into housing first, then hooked into various services, with each case realistically taking three to six months to accomplish these stabilizing tasks.

Commissioner TRONTELL asked about a reference in tonight's report, provided during the roundtable, of a greater success rate of the Housing First model with

this approach, and a more rapid payback of the investment. Ms. Wadiak stated that she could get the information on statistics to the Commissioners. The cost savings are in people not being in jail and/or using emergency room for medical care. Commissioner BROWN asked about the status of a transitional housing program on Alice Avenue and the status of EHC.

Commissioner ANDERSON asked how Mountain View works with other cities in the region on the affordable housing issue. There was a brief discussion on this topic, addressed by Senior Planner Adriana Garefalos. Commissioner McALISTER asked Senior Planner Garefalos for her background and involvement in this issue. Commissioner McALISTER asked about the status of a property on Grant Road (as a potential development site), which is now vacant, and whether the property has a Conditional Use Permit.

Commissioner TRONTELL commented on a chart that summarizes sheltered and unsheltered homeless in 2004 and 2007, across cities, reflecting close to 25 percent reduction in homeless people being sheltered. She asked for information on larger trends, which may address this reduction in numbers. Mr. Hayter commented that an accurate count might be difficult to compare, year to year.

Commissioner ANDERSON asked what happens when the new Central Park Apartments open regarding seniors getting into the complex. He asked about the process for getting on the wait list. Senior Planner Garefalos reported that these apartments are opening in phases, with Phase I filled. As units are available, the City goes through an extensive outreach process involving the Housing Coalition, with applications being selected by lottery. The Phase II application process will be starting up soon, with a good number of people on the wait list. Senior Planner Garefalos stated that everyone has an equal chance to get on the wait list, with a Mountain View preference.

Commissioner SODERBERG clarified the function of the Environmental Planning Commission is to provide space for the housing units, with zoning and rezoning issues, to determine what kind of space is available. He acknowledged the magnitude of needs and costs and asked staff when the Environmental Planning Commission would get involved with the land use and allocation of housing space to housing. Principal Planner Alkire replied that it would be an upcoming phase of the Housing Element update process.

Chairperson INKS asked Mr. Hayter for comment clarification about improving the Below-Market-Rate Ordinance. Mr. Hayter commented that a variety of things could be done, not just in-lieu fees. Individual projects could perhaps be designed to allow a greater mix of units in a given project; a moderate-income range could include ownership units; or more distribution of the units. Mr. Hayter commented that Santa Clara provides shared-equity loans at the higher end of the low-income

range. He suggested that the City work more closely in a proactive relationship with nonprofit organizations.

Linda Lauzze, Administrative and Neighborhood Services Manager, commented that the City Council has directed staff to look at different options to create more below-market-rate units, scheduled for consideration in the early part of 2009. She added that the Council has adopted an affordable housing strategy, with \$18.5 million in housing funds, most of which is reserved for two projects. The City Council previously felt the most important thing was to build more units. Currently, that is not part of the affordable housing strategy.

Commissioner BROWN commented that during the last housing strategy recommendations, the Environmental Planning Commission had recommended buying land as a priority.

Chairperson INKS opened the public input portion.

Bob Caprilas, Mountain View, commented that the Rota Care Clinic is available for uninsured people to get health care. The Rotary Club sponsors the Clinic. Mr. Caprilas asked who provides funding to run the San Antonio House.

Charles Gardyn commented that the Housing First Program has been very successful on the East Coast. He added that there has been an influx of Vietnam-era veterans and suggested that the City give serious thought to assisting veterans with affordable housing.

Commissioner ANDERSON commented that the City is removing a lot of rental housing by getting around the Condominium Conversion Ordinance. He suggested that the City consider building temporary housing on certain pieces of land undergoing aggressive rehabilitation, so as not to displace people during the property rehabilitation. He asked if there is an inventory of rental units that are affordable in the City right now, and he suggested consideration of something creative with rental housing when units are being removed.

Chairperson INKS expressed appreciation for staff support and public participation in the roundtable.

## **6.2 Walking Tour Discussion**

Commissioner ANDERSON led the discussion on the walking tour of the Old Middlefield Way area into the Old Mountain View area. He asked for Commissioner impressions from this walking tour.

Commissioner McALISTER commented that he felt he was looking at the future of Mountain View, with three-story stacked housing. He added that this works well for young people, but what happens as families grow and age? Do people move out of the City at that point? Commissioner SODERBERG commented about the profit factor for builders going into these projects, and he queried that with this complete range of housing, what happens to the quality of design and construction? He asked if the City controls the quality of housing. Principal Planner Alkire commented that the quality of interior and exterior are both factors that are reviewed by the City's Development Review Committee process and building plan check process. Other questions were: how to mitigate problems when considering multiple zones; and are current setbacks in place adequate to handle the transition in a considerate way for existing property owners?

Commissioner ANDERSON agreed regarding the potential zoning interface issues. Commissioner McALISTER commented on the economic pressure to sell and develop properties, and he expressed concern that light industrial/commercial services may be driven out unless zoning comes into play. He commented on balancing the needs of the City versus the needs of the property owners.

Chairperson INKS suggested that, in thinking about housing for the future that will involve an aging demographic, perhaps builders could incorporate plans into housing being built now for future options to adapt existing housing to changing demographics. Commissioner BROWN commented that she has heard from the community that downtown Mountain View is desirable for seniors because of walkability to services. Chairperson INKS commented that zoning-prohibited conditional uses gets very constraining, and he wondered how specific the City really needs to be. Commissioner FERNANDEZ commented that the reason for keeping the zoning specific is to prevent the market driving the area completely and to preserve those specific uses; otherwise, it would be whatever makes the owner the most money.

Principal Planner Alkire stated that he has background information to give the Commissioners from when the Interim Ordinance for the CS Zoning District was passed. He added that the CS Zoning District along Old Middlefield Way is a focus area and that land uses will be revised accordingly when going through the General Plan update process.

Other comments from Commissioners included: walking into the new development was very helpful to see what is going on in the area; when the next walking tour is scheduled; the downtown walk was very helpful in how some of the structures are weathering compared to others; provided insight into land use and zoning decisions; future walking tours might include the San Antonio area, El Camino Real and/or a General Plan focus area.

Commissioner ANDERSON commented on the area between Villa Street and Evelyn Avenue, adding that it seems there is underutilized land there. Principal Planner Alkire provided background on this site, that plans had been reviewed, but the market was starting to cool, the developer had some site constraints, and the application was then withdrawn.

Principal Planner Alkire reported that staff is planning a bus tour for housing sites, tentatively scheduled for October 1, 2008, starting at about 4:00 p.m. This tour could include focus areas. He stated that at the next meeting, the Commission will be asked for ideas to include on the bus tour. It was noted that the public is allowed to accompany staff on the bus tour.

Charles Gardyn commented on a potential conflict between auto uses and residential uses in the Old Middlefield Way area. He added that the 94043 Zip Code has 263 auto repair places. He suggested simplifying the permit process to create a fair playing field within community services.

## **7. COMMISSION/STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS, QUESTIONS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **7.1 Possible Upcoming Agenda Items**

- a. September 17, 2008—Housing Element
- b. October 1, 2008—To be determined

Commissioner SODERBERG asked for an update on the hotel situation in Mountain View, regarding a hotel being considered for Castro Street and a quality hotel in the Shoreline area. Principal Planner Alkire reported that he would gather that information to provide to the Commission.

Principal Planner Alkire reported that the next meeting, scheduled for September 17, 2008, would consider the Housing Element. He stated that Silicon Valley Realtors, Chamber of Commerce, Tri-County Apartments and others have been invited to attend to present their recommendations. The Commission will also be asked for direction on areas to include on the bus tour as part of the Housing Element. Principal Planner Alkire reported that the draft Visioning Report comes back to the Commission on October 15. After a review, it will then be forwarded to the Council for consideration on November 18, 2008.



## 7.2 Announcements

Commissioner ANDERSON announced that he recently walked around the City and that the City was named one of the most walkable. He announced a community bicycle ride for Shoreline at Mountain View's 25th Anniversary, at 1:00 p.m., in Mountain View. The Mountain View Art and Wine Festival is also this weekend.

## 7.3 Requests from Commissioners—None.

## 8. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson INKS declared the meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m. with the consensus of the Commission to the Regular Meeting of Wednesday, September 17, 2008, in the Council Chambers, 500 Castro Street.

Respectfully submitted,



Martin Alkire  
Principal Planner

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